

North Skye Broadband Steering Group Meeting No 10

14th January 2016 Glendale Community Hall – 18.00

Minutes

Attendees

Roy Bennett, (Chair) (RB), Geoff Semler (GMS), Elgar Finlay (EF), Mo Scobbie (MS)

By teleconference Nick Duffill (ND), Nial Till (NT), Nigel Redfern (NR), Robin Crorie (RC), Charles McCrimmon (Deputy Chair) (CMC)

Apologies were received from James Caldwell

Absent but referred to in minutes AN Alastair Nicholson, SR Stuart Robertson, BS Brian Smith, CS Calum Stiven, SBUG Skye Broadband Users Group, CBS Community Broadband Scotland

The SG Chair RB opened the meeting and the meeting followed the published Agenda.

Previous Minutes for 6.12.2015 were accepted. It was noted due to an increased workload for CMC who was working between time zones at present it was unreasonable for the group to expect CMC to undertake the minutes for this meeting. The SG Chair volunteered to take this meetings minutes, it was noted a minutes secretary was still required.

Action Point SG Chair

Minutes

Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest

1 Progress Report

HIE /CBS report – there was no formal report from HIE or CBS – instead an update was given by EF with regard to the public consultation, he stated he had been advised by CS of CBS that to date no comments or expressions of interest had been received.

Actions from minutes –

Directors Progress reports GMS shared the current progress on HIE Funding, he expected to meet with SR of HIE to sign for and receive the funding which will be £74,000 subject to the satisfaction of the directors with regards to terms and conditions attached to the contract (if any) with an expected payment of the first tranche of funds within 2 weeks. The first tranche will be a 1/3rd of the funds upfront. The sums allowed by HIE will be revisited if necessary if further expenditure is required. **Action Point GMS & EF** Establishment of suitable accounting processes and financial contracts

GMS also confirmed conversations had taken place with AN of HIE with a view to arranging a workshop on Legal Structures for the second phase. (See action point in section 8)

SG Chair reported progress on the Master Archive document was nearly complete with a full record of all documents and pieces of work chronologically assembled and final versions ratified, he was awaiting specific file formats for 2 or 3 of the files and 2 source documents charting the start point of the whole project. This work was anticipated to be completed for the next meeting and would form a basis for the document library on the website.

Action Point SG Chair RB

Archived History of the project to date

GMS also reported on the director's discussions that had taken place prior to the SG meeting with regard to an estimated budget and funding options for the second phase of the project. The conclusion had been reached that a funding shortfall of approx. £600,000 would remain after allowances had been made for the CBS grant. It was concluded that a number of options be given further consideration for funding and would be discussed further at the appropriate point in the meeting.

2 Communications Group report and Strategy

EF and MS reported that no further progress had been made in developing the branding. It was agreed this would be a priority and a timeline would be developed for a communications strategy. Enquiries would be made with B4RN with regard to utilisation of their website design if possible and also to establish a relationship to share knowledge they had gained in their build.

Action Point EF & Communications Group

- 1 Report on strategy development
- 2 Contact B4RN on Monday

NSB Website and B4RN – Community Engagement strategy

No further news on website development, initial quotes were not acceptable and the issue was being revisited with a view to contacting B4RN developers and obtaining a quote. Still waiting additional quotes for this work to come in in addition to Canaan quote.

Action Point EF

Obtain further quotes and contact B4RN developers.

3 Public Launch

Given the controversy on Broadband that has unfolded within the wider Skye community the subject and profile of the group SBUG was raised. It was noted that with receipt of the funding imminent, the public Launch of the project was now a priority. A strategy needed to be agreed on as to what form that would take and various options were discussed on whether or not it should be

- 1 Directors only + PM
- 2 Directors only / PM and representatives from the SG
- 3 Directors PM & the full SG.

It is probably that all contributors to the group will be present on the Island in the first week in February so it was felt that that was an appropriate moment to have an official launch. After a brief discussion it was agreed that all members of the project should have the opportunity to be present at the launch, the date and venue was agreed as below. Political representation was discussed and it was agreed that we would remain politically neutral – no political representatives to be **Launch details**

1 8th February

2 Venue Skeabost Hotel (if it was available)

3 Time 10.00am to 12.00 noon

All members of the SG the Directors and PM would be invited, and those who wished to attend would do so.

Action Point SG Chair

Circulate details of the launch to all members of the project – members to confirm their attendance ahead of the event to allow appropriate planning.

Action Point EF

- 1 Book the venue and liaise with HIE Press office, HIE and CBS as to who else will attend.

2 Press statement

3 Briefing Statement

Action Point all SG members

4 Agreed that SG members should send GMS any “difficult” questions they could think of, so prepared and consistent responses to them would be ready should the need arise.

Action Point Branding EF & RC

4 Skye Broadband Users Group - NSB response and Media activities

The SG Chair brought to the group attention that activities of the Skye Broadband Users Facebook Group and the ensuing controversy over the dire lack of broadband provision that had occurred across Skye during the Christmas period. A discussion ensued that included the following points

1. The SG was informed a statement has been issued to the Group’s founder BS outlining NSB plans with a request that it be made available to his group’s members – his response was to post on his page that his users could visit NSB Facebook page to read the statement, but that he would not be promoting any particular solution other than to pressurise BT to improve their provision of Broadband to his group members.
2. Action in relation to the issuing of the statement was only taken as a result of miss-information published on the SBUG site. BS then again misrepresented the facts when interviewed by the BBC and GMS raised a complaint with the BBC pointing out that they had inadvertently presented the piece with bias.
3. It was noted that many of his group members had been joined by others either unwittingly or without their prior consent being obtained, GMS noted he had been and had withdrawn his membership.
4. It was agreed that our project may improve the broadband provision for some members of his group.
5. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to remain in contact with BS, continue to monitor this additional group and ensure they were aware alternative solutions were being sought for those not included in the BT rollout of Superfast Broadband.
6. EF noted that BS had indicated an interest in NSB activities and may be willing to explore what we were planning.
7. Given the raised profile of Broadband provision on Skye and its problems in general it would be appropriate for us to engage with all the Media outlets following the story and indicate that additional solutions were being sought of which NSB was one party planning to improve Broadband provision to those not covered in the BT Broadband Superfast roll out and ensure the NSB voice was reported accurately and timeously. It was noted that GMS had officially companied to STV in regard to an interview with BS that had not reported the work done by NSB and had therefore failed to present a balanced picture of broadband provision on Skye.
8. Further engagement was planned with all the media agencies currently watching the SBUG.

Action Point EF

To follow up on his engagement with BS and the SBUG in the event of any further misrepresentation

5 ITT Document – Farrpoint Atkins 21.01.2016 – NSB requirements

The group discussed the approach to the NSB requirement for the ITT it was agreed that GMS and NT document would-be used as a basis for discussion the SG were asked to think about what questions they would bring to the workshop.

Workshop timings are

3.00pm Directors, SG Chair and PM.

5.00PM for the Steering Group.

Venue HIE offices Portree

6 Funding – Phase one & Two Considerations

Now phase one funding has been resolved discussion turned to the director's discussions that had taken place prior to the SG meeting with regard to an estimated budget and funding options for the second phase of the project. The conclusion had been reached that a funding shortfall of approx. £600,000 would remain after allowances had been made for the CBS grant. It was concluded that a number of options be given further consideration for funding. These options were further discussed and the explanation for the funding shortfall of £600,000 was examined. MS raised concerns with regard to inclusiveness and affordability to the community in Skye. It was agreed that any share issue would be structured with this in mind. RC discussed with the group the implications of asset locks and a variety of differences between the company structures referring back to his original matrix that had been circulated earlier. It was agreed that the SG members would give due consideration to their individual preferences and complete a +/- matrix that was to be circulated by the SG Chair stating both their queries and preferences ahead of the planned workshop

1. Share Issue – it was noted these be of sufficiently low enough individual value to allow full community participation, a point raised by MS
2. Additional Grants & Investment Sources – Windfarm trusts, Lottery, Social Impact Bonds, etc. etc.
3. Restricting the properties covered in the event that the CBS grant fell short of what was required or appropriate in the circumstances, it was agreed that if CBS failed to come up with an appropriate share of the overall funding NSB may have to restrict the residences that it could cover.

In view of the points with regard to company structure and future funding issues it was agreed that the Gigaplus Iona & Mull document would be circulated with regard to relevant company structures and choices facing the SG as to better inform which structure would be best suited going forward (see action point in section 8)

Action Point SG Chair

Multiple choice document outlining the various benefits based on earlier work by RC and used to compile queries and questions from the SG members

7 Business Plan

It was discussed that we were now at the point where a full business plan needed to be created and it was agreed that it would go through several iterations before a final draft was agreed. The business plan for B4RN bore striking resemblances to our proposal so it was agreed that we would use it as a template to begin the exercise with and amend accordingly. Much of the information needed was dependent on the outcome of the ITT Farrpoint workshop and further research would be needed by the group as to the best way forward with regards especially in regard to backhaul. The SG Chair informed the group that he had the e-mail address of the JANET connection teams and they would be willing to receive an enquiry with regards to backhaul provision in their networks and how it related to Skye.

8 Company Structures – Combensoc or other entity

A discussion was undertaken in which various forms of company structure were explored and it was agreed that the group needed further information prior to making a decision it was agreed a document based on work done by RC would be circulated for SG members to consider it was also agreed a workshop would be arranged for the various options to be considered this workshop was to be carried out by the Plunkett Foundation. Given the timescale of the ITT it was appreciated that the new company would be formed and would run in tandem

with NSB until such time as NSB had fulfilled its function and the ITT exercise and selection of contractor had been completed. With regard to choice of company structure it was agreed that the Gigaplus Iona & Mull document would be circulated

Action Point EF

Agree with HIE and the Plunkett Foundation a suitable time and date for the workshop

Action Point SG Chair

Multiple choice document outlining the various benefits based on earlier work by RC and used to compile queries and questions from the SG members

9 Steering group – future meetings and strategy

Given the involvement of the project the steering group noted its role was changing as it approached the transition period between NSB and the new company that was to be formed to take the project forward as the community engagement phase emerged. It was agreed that this would necessitate a revision of the SG, its TOR and composition, it was agreed that insufficient time remained in this meeting for a full discussion and consideration of the matters required so a further meeting was scheduled specifically for this Agenda item to be resolved. Special meeting agreed to be on the 11th February with this as the Sole Agenda Item unless other urgent matters arose.

10 Visits to Meet the Suppliers event in Edinburgh & FTTH Conference Luxembourg

ND had advised that there is a “Meet the supplier’s event” run by CBS planned for late January. The implications of meeting suppliers prior to the ITT exercise was discussed and a number of vulnerabilities and risks were identified. In addition EF had been contacted by one company that had expressed an interest in coming and talking to the group prior to the ITT it was felt that this was fraught with considerable risk and therefore the invitation was turned down. However it was agreed that if CBS were to offer a formal invitation to the Meet the Supplier event then SG member(s) who wished to attend would be able to do so. It was agreed the EF would clarify with CS of CBS and the SG Chair would circulate the details. RC had expressed a willingness to attend and possibly ND.

Discussion took place around the Fibre to the Home conference in Luxembourg during 16 – 18 February and whilst the SG Chair has secured free tickets worth 500 euros each for the group, it was recognised that time pressures on the group prevented the SG Chair and Directors from attending. It was agreed that if any other SG member wished to attend then the details would be circulated and individual SG members could attend at their own expense.

Action Point SG Chair RB

1. Circulate CBS event invitation and details if it was granted.
2. Circulate FTTH conference details

12 AOB

There was no other business the Chair thanked the members for attending and the meeting was closed at 20.40

Next Meeting

It was agreed the next meeting would be 11th February and would be at the Glendale Hall. Teleconferencing was discussed and it was agreed to stick to the present arrangement

